

# Annual Program Year Activity Report

Addressing the Period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016

*You cannot escape the responsibilities  
of tomorrow by evading them today.  
Abraham Lincoln*

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THE SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

# Year of Challenges

## Message from the Executive Director

Robert Schuller once commented that tough times never last, but tough people do. That has certainly been the case for the SSCRPC over the past program year, as the challenges that the Commission and its staff faced were many and varied. It should come as no surprise that the primary difficulties were largely due to such unanticipated events as budget grid-lock at the state level, which reduced the SSCRPC's financial resources and the staff that these resources support, new State and Federal requirements that often came with little guidance and no additional resources, changes in the ways that residents seek assistance due to ever changing technologies, and even acts of nature. However, and as President Lincoln advised us, one cannot postpone one's responsibilities.

But challenges can have positive aspects as well, and the difficulties of the past year have stimulated our thinking, caused us to better focus our efforts, driven the SSCRPC staff to arrive at new approaches in meeting our responsibilities, and even discover new ways to serve our participating jurisdictions and their residents. You will find many aspects of this in the following pages of this report; from our efforts to address recent flooding, to new ways to share the information we develop with those we serve.

Of course a full review of all of the Commission's many activities and projects during PY2015-2016 would require a document much

larger than this one, so this report is limited to those that the SSCRPC staff believes to be the most consequential in understanding the work of the past year. We believe that the SSCRPC has a core responsibility to advise our partnering jurisdictions, assist in their planning, help them evaluate their community needs, and then provide some of the leadership necessary to help them meet those needs. I think you will find that your staff has met these responsibilities energetically and professionally.

And if this year provided a lesson, it is that the SSCRPC's ability to follow President Lincoln's sage advice in the face of unanticipated challenges is only due to the experience, expertise and commitment of its staff. Therefore this annual report not only provides examples of the major projects and activities of the past program year, but saves a little space to better introduce the Commission's staff.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you and the residents of our region.

**E. Norman Sims, Executive Director**

Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission  
Respectfully submitted to the Commission, July 20, 2016



## THE COMMISSION'S LEADERSHIP DURING THE PROGRAM YEAR

### Membership as of June 1, 2016

(Indicates member's official designated representative)

**Mr. E. Norman Sims**, Executive Director, SSCRPC

### 2015-2016 Officers and Members of the Executive Policy Board:

**Mr. Brad Mills**, Chair, Citizen Member, Springfield

**Mr. Eric Hansen**, Vice-Chair, Citizen Member, Sangamon County

**Mr. Bill Moss**, Secretary, Citizen Member, Springfield

**Hon. James Langfelder**, Mayor, City of Springfield (Ms. Karen Davis)

**Hon. Andy Van Meter**, Chairman, Sangamon County Board (Mr. Brian McFadden)

**Mr. Jeff Vose**, Regional Superintendent of Schools (Ms. Shannon Fehrholz/Mr. Lyle Wind)

**Mr. Kenneth Springs**, Member-at-Large, Citizen Member, Sangamon County

### Other Commission Members:

**Mr. Brian Brewer**, Chair, Springfield Mass Transit District (Mr. Frank Squires)

**Mr. Dick Ciotti**, Chair, Springfield Metro Sanitary District (Mr. Gregg Humphrey)

**Mr. Larry Hamlin**, Citizen Member, Sangamon County

**Hon. Joe McMenamin**, Alderman, City of Springfield

**Hon. George Preckwinkle**, Member, Sangamon County Board (Mr. Charlie Stratton)

**Hon. Andrew Proctor**, Alderman, City of Springfield

**Hon. Leslie Sgro**, President, Springfield Park District (Mr. Elliott McKinley)

**Hon. Greg Stumpf**, Member, Sangamon County Board

**Mr. Frank Vala**, Chair, Springfield Airport Authority (Mr. Roger Blickensderfer)

**Ms. Val Yazell**, Citizen Member, Springfield



Photo: PEXELS.COM

## Concerning the Commission's Finances

The column to the right provides information concerning the Commission's revenues and expenditures from Dec. 1, 2014, through Nov. 30, 2015, the last audited year. The reader will note that expenditures are shown as exceeding revenues by \$10,332. However, the difference in the amount of Revenue and Expenditures is due to the fact that the SSCRPC bills on a quarterly basis. Therefore, two months worth of expenditures are included in the financial statement that are not billed out until the quarterly billing is done in January for the period of October – December.

The SSCRPC's financial planning must take into account a number of factors each year. The first is that the Commission must operate under four different fiscal years. As per its establishing ordinance, the Commission's budgeting must be done based upon the Sangamon County fiscal year, which runs from December to the following November. However, the Commission receives funding from the City of Springfield, the State of Illinois, and the Federal government, all of which have fiscal years that differ from the County's as well as one another's, and their financial support may not be fully known when the budget is prepared. These years also differ from the Commission's program year, which runs from July 1 until June 30 of the following year, which is the period covered by this report.

In addition, the Commission often competes for and is awarded grants and contracts during each fiscal year. These opportunities may be unknown when the budget is prepared because of the various project years used by the granting agencies. These projects often have performance periods with specified beginning and ending dates that are different from the governmental fiscal years noted above.

This requires that the Commission staff pay close attention to both budgeting and the management of the resources it receives, and is one of the reasons why the SSCRPC is the subject of two audits each year: the Sangamon County audit and a separate independent audit of the Commission's finances.

## FINANCES:

Revenues and Expenditures (rounded to nearest dollar), Dec. 1, 2014, through Nov. 30, 2015, as per independent audit conducted by Hughes, Cameron & Company, LLC. Report does not include Sangamon County Zoning Office.

### REVENUES:

General Planning - City of Springfield .....	184,342
General Planning – Sangamon County .....	376,270
Transportation Study .....	465,503
Materials & Support - SMTD .....	19,490
Hazard Mitigation Plan .....	23,202
Other Projects .....	1,768
Reimbursed Expenses .....	<u>240</u>

**TOTAL REVENUES ..... \$1,070,815**

### EXPENDITURES:

Personnel .....	\$629,288
Boards & Committees .....	3,750
Fringe Benefits.....	250,990
Materials & Supplies.....	10,206
Printing .....	2,392
Meetings & Dues .....	2,823
Travel & Mileage .....	1,270
Equipment Purchase.....	9,379
Equipment Maintenance.....	4,294
Equipment Rental .....	418
Publications.....	5,129
Postage .....	2,178
Contractual Services .....	17,166
Allocated Administrative Costs .....	125,793
Uncollected Debts .....	15,000
Depreciation .....	<u>1,071</u>

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES ..... \$1,081,147**



# COMPREHENSIVE & STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORTS

Continuing to help communities look to the future and address the new challenges they will face

The SSCRPC's Strategic and Comprehensive Planning efforts center on helping our county and its communities identify and address future challenges through long-range planning; specifically the development and implementation of community comprehensive plans.

Since the Commission believes that every community should have a current comprehensive plan, one of our goals over the past several years has been to increase the number of municipal jurisdictions that have such a plan in place. The Commission has typically taken on one such planning project each year, and during previous program years developed or updated comprehensive plans for Curran, Leland Grove, Riverton, Sherman, and Williams-ville, along with completion of the *Sangamon Regional Strategic Plan*.

In the past the SSCRPC was able to address this goal through the use of state Comprehensive Regional Planning funds (CRPF), which helped subsidize the cost of these projects, making the development

of a comprehensive plan affordable for even small, rural communities. Unfortunately, this state funding was lost during PY 2015-16.

For this reason, during PY 2015-16 the Commission focused its limited resources only on completing the Village of Dawson's plan (see below).

But the completion of the Dawson plan was not the only challenge. Toward the end of the program year the Commission's staff began work to update the City of Springfield's comprehensive plan. This plan, completed by the SSCRPC in 2000 after almost two years of work, is now 16 years old and in need of update. But to show how some challenges have been met, the current effort is expected to take only 16 to 18 months.

In large part the difference in the amount of time it now takes to develop a plan as complex as the Springfield

Springfield Comprehensive Plan looks toward "Forging a New Legacy"



one compared to 16 years ago, is due to new computer-based applications not available in 2000. This includes more powerful geographic information systems, computerized models that allow the SSCRPC staff to run various transportation scenarios, and, hopefully, a new computerized model that will allow the Commission to run various land use simulations.

In doing this work the Commission staff is also aided by other work it completed over the past few years. This includes such products as the regional strategic plan (which not only made recommendations for the region but also provided transportation corridor designs), an analysis of the 2010 Census results, the 2040 LRTP, and a long-term review of the regional economy.

## The Village of Dawson Comprehensive Plan

The Village of Dawson's motto is, "You're with friends here". The SSCRPC certainly found that to be the case while working with Village Board President Jeremy Nunes and Dawson's Citizen Committee on the Village's new comprehensive plan.

In completing the Dawson plan, the Planning Commission found that a key goal for the Village was protecting and promoting its rich heritage, as well as the community character that makes it unique, while still encouraging population growth. Indeed, and as is the case in many other rural communities in the county, the Commission found that Dawson's largest challenge was finding ways to encourage additional future population growth.

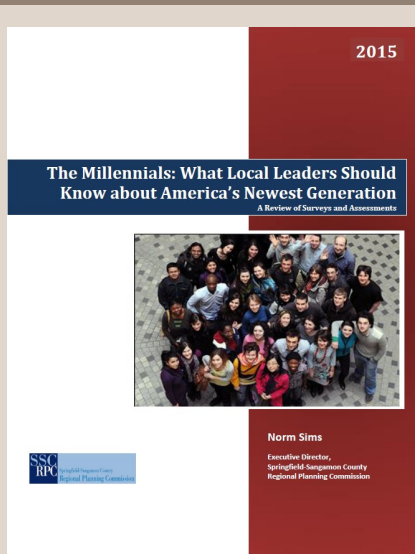
However, the Village has many conditions that favor growth, including its attributes in the areas of location, history, solid infrastructure and natural environment. This leads to a vision of Dawson as a place that is welcoming to families, near enough to a metro area to have the advantages of a bedroom community without the growth problems these communities often have, and close enough to nearby recreational amenities to offer a varied lifestyle attractive to both current and future new residents.

All-in-all, the SSCRPC identified almost 30 strategies that the Village may use to meet its challenges over the next 20 years.



# RESEARCH AND ANALYTIC PROJECTS

Conducting the research and analysis necessary to identify the challenges our communities face, *and* how they might successfully address them



## Demographic Challenges

In a few decades America may not resemble the country we live in today. Many forces are at work causing change, and one of them is the growth and potential impact of our nation's newest generational group: the *Millennials*.

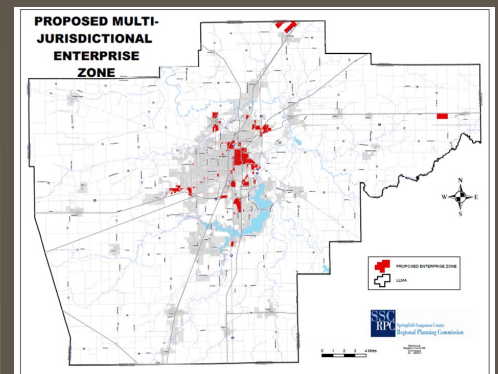
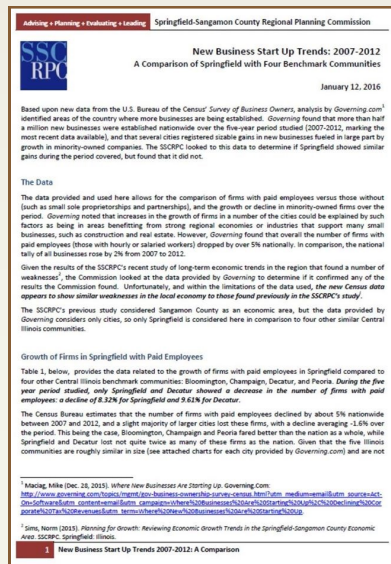
For this reason, the SSCRPC took an exhaustive look at those born after 1980 to assess the impact they might have on our region. The resulting report considered: differences in the groups demographics; its unique generational personality, particularly in comparison to previous generational groups; how it might fit into the workplace; its consumer behaviors; where this generational group desires to live, and what they might expect in these areas; and how they may affect government and governance.

Given the nature and topic of this study, it received broad recognition during the program year, including being a feature article in *Illinois County* magazine.



## Economic Challenges

The SSCRPC staff continued its work of assessing the regional economy during PY 2015-16, building upon the major review of the local economy from 1970 to 2012 begun last year. Several new studies were added to the series, including a regional "shift-share" analysis, a review of new business start-up activities in the Springfield metro area compared to four other similar areas, and a review of in- and out-migration in the county over the past five years.



## Successful State Enterprise Zone Designation

Unlike many of the other regional planning organizations in Illinois, the SSCRPC believes that its mission includes providing its partnering communities with analytic work that advises them about changes occurring in their populations, economies, or even society at large. In this way the Commission feels it is better preparing them for the challenges they will face in the future.

Some of this work is used to identify best practices that communities may use to improve performance, and is distributed through the SSCRPC's *TrendLines* series. In other cases the information is provided through individual reports, white papers and briefing documents. Several of these reports are mentioned in the columns to the left, and all are available on its website: [www.sscrpc.com](http://www.sscrpc.com).

The Planning Commission also provides its partnering jurisdictions with analytic work for other purposes; including providing Springfield and Sangamon County with the market region economic analysis that they needed to successfully compete for joint Illinois Enterprise Zone designation. This designation, which was awarded in PY 2015-16, marked the first time that the County and City of Springfield have joined together for such designation, which will advance their economic development efforts.



# PROVIDING THE PUBLIC WITH BETTER ACCESS TO WHAT WE KNOW...AND ARE THINKING ABOUT

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Not only does information change, but how people seek it out and use it changes as well. This provides another challenge for the Commission as it seeks to keep its partnering jurisdictions and their residents informed.

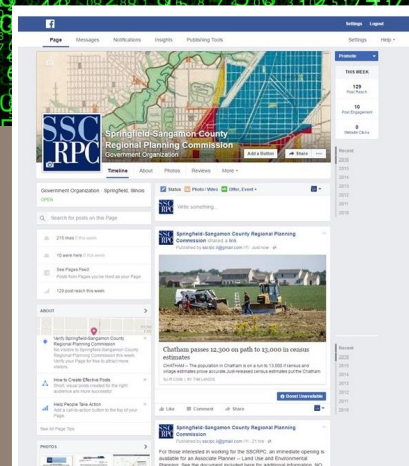
One of the ways the SSCRPC is attempting to keep pace with these needs and demands is by making changes to its website. During the past year the Commission

staff undertook a thoughtful effort to assess and then redesign its internet site to make it not only more graphically pleasing, but also more user friendly. This is part of a two stage plan that will continue making changes into the next program year. As part of this work, the firm of Levi, Ray & Shoup — which provides Sangamon County with its web-based products — is now redesigning the SSCRPC site. Among other things, the new design will give special attention to what the Commission is calling its “eMap Room”, where numerous interactive maps

are available. More information about these interactive maps is provided on the next page.

The Planning Commission is also working to expand the information it provides via social media. The SSCRPC has, for example, expanded its presence on *Facebook*, making its page a useful place for interested parties to go to find out more about what the SSCRPC is doing and the topics it is following. For example, a great deal of information concerning actions that the SSCRPC and Sangamon County were taking in response to this spring’s flooding in the area was provided to residents via the Commission’s *Facebook* and internet homepage sites.

Those who have not accessed these sites previously may be surprised by the vast array of information available to them when they do, from interactive maps to all of the SSCRPC plans and analytic reports.



## TRACKING BEST PRACTICES

To help local governments in the region better meet their challenges, the SSCRPC works to identify improved practices that it then shares with local leaders. These best practices are often described in its *TrendLines* publication.

During PY 2014-15, for example, the SSCRPC produced an issue of *TrendLines* addressing simple but more cost efficient and effective ways of meeting local transportation infrastructure needs. During this past program year the Commission turned its attention to providing local leaders with tips and tactics that they can use to improve local management and administration. In large part this change in orientation for *TrendLines* came about due to the work of the Citizens’ Efficiency Commission for Sangamon County, which found that one of the ways that the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments in the region could be improved is through additional training of public officials and their staffs.

For this reason, the *TrendLines* for the new year focused on some resolutions local officials could make to improve performance, including starter community performance measures, some principles for better performance, guidelines for improving public participation, questions public officials should ask about their budgets, and trends shaping online government. All past issues of *TrendLines* are available in the “Information Center” of the Commission’s website: [www.sscrpc.com](http://www.sscrpc.com)





Realtors take part in presentation on SSRPC interactive mapping applications.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are an important tool in the everyday work of the SSRPC staff. Since most of what a planner deals with has to be in a location — a physical place — GIS provides the planner with a computer based system that allows him or her to overlay, analyze, present and spatially locate various layers of data to aid in the decision making process. Since GIS has evolved to become more than just a mapping application, it can offer both the planner *and* the public an interactive tool useful when making decisions.

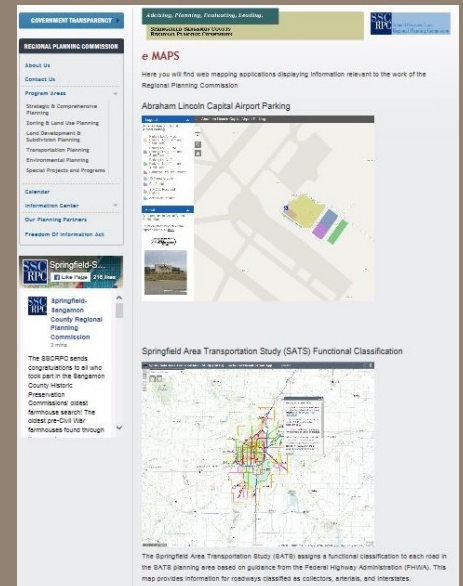
Because of this, PY 2015-16 has been the year of interactive GIS mapping applications: almost a “map of the month” club! In an effort to reach out to the general public and better portray valuable information, the SSRPC staff created nine new interactive mapping applications available through the *eMaps Room* located on the SSRPC website. Along with such previous applications as county zoning, the location of active development projects, and the mapping of sensitive environmental areas, the new applications include interactive access to such things as the status of transportation projects

## MAKING GIS A PUBLIC UTILITY

Providing communities and their residents with a new tool for decision making

for which funding is committed, amenities along the county’s various bike trails, the location of historic landmarks and sites, and even parking availability at the airport.

Some applications involved extensive field work, such as gathering the amenities included in the Sangamon County Trails Amenities mapping application, to simply taking a section of a plan and trying to create an application that highlights the important infrastructure projects that are on the long or short term planning efforts. Plans are always created but unless the message can be easily conveyed they tend not to be as successful as they were intended to be. It is a goal of the Commission to provide the tools to make a plan successful and useful to both jurisdictions and their residents.



## Continuing Our Work with Local Leaders

During the program year the SSRPC continued in meeting its commitment to assist local leaders. This involved two staff activities, the first being the coordination of the **Regional Leadership Council (RLC)**, and the second was its continuing work with the **Citizens’ Efficiency Commission (CEC)** for Sangamon County.

The RLC is made up of city and village mayors and board presidents from the various communities in Sangamon County, along with the Chairman of the Sangamon County Board. Its purpose is to establish a forum where municipal officials can meet and work together to solve common problems, share ideas, make use of opportunities for collaborative action, and even find ways to serve their communities more efficiently and effectively. This past year the RLC addressed a number of items, from fire districts to animal control to new highway signage.

The CEC, now in its second phase of its work, continues to address ways in which its various recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments in the region might be implemented. The SSRPC provided a great deal of research and analytic assistance to the CEC in the development of its original recommendations, and now continues to assist it as the group goes about the more difficult job of implementation.

The areas in which the CEC continues to explore implementation options include finding ways to address issues discovered during its review of regional fire districts, looking at how police departments in the region might better work together, considering the potential benefits of transferring the Springfield city sewer system to the Metro Sanitary District, and reducing some state mandates on local governments that do not demonstrate great cost-benefit.



Regional Leadership Council meets





# TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The SSRPC's Transportation Planning staff steps up to new challenges, working to measure performance, forge new relationships, and advance a multi-modal transportation agenda

As transportation is the “glue” that connects communities and their residents, the role that the SSRPC plays in transportation planning for the region is a vital one. During PY 2015-16 the Transportation Planning group addressed a number of new challenges, including the need to do more with fewer resources.

Federal laws and regulations require that states form, and the Governor designate, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in each urbanized area with a population of over 50,000, such as the Springfield metro area. The mission of the MPO is to coordinate a “comprehensive, cooperative and continuing” transportation planning process, and in the Springfield-Sangamon County planning area this “C-3” planning process is conducted by the SSRPC's Transportation Planning staff through the Springfield Area Transportation Study (SATS).

SATS currently operates through a cooperative agreement that was approved almost 10 years ago that brought together six jurisdictional entities that are represented through SATS' governance structure which is made up of a Technical Committee and a Policy Committee. These six jurisdictions serve as the voting members on these committees, and include:

- Sangamon County;
- City of Springfield;
- Village of Chatham;
- Springfield Mass Transit District;
- Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Region 4, District 6; and
- Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission.

Other, non-voting, technical advisors are included on these committees, including representatives of: IDOT's Office of Planning and Programming, Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, and the District 6 Local Roads and Streets Project Implementation

Engineer; the Federal Highway Administration's Illinois Division Planning, Environment and ROW Team Leader; the Springfield Airport Authority; and the Illinois Commerce Commission's Rail Safety Program.

This year was a particularly challenging one for the Transportation Planning staff, as it had to deal with an almost six month delay in its federal funding caused by the State's legislative gridlock (which was only resolved by an arrangement through which these funds came directly from the federal level rather than through the state), as well as the loss of IDOT Comprehensive Regional Planning funds.

Even so, at the same time that these funds were being withheld, the SSRPC Transportation Planning staff was still faced with additional federal and state administrative challenges.

These challenges included the development of the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, a major effort that must be accomplished every five years, the development and implementation of new performance measures, which were mandated by the new federal transportation act, a complete program review by the Federal Highway Administration, which was previously only conducted with MPO's in the larger Transportation Management Areas, and new state reporting requirements as part of a legislated effort to ensure grant transparency.

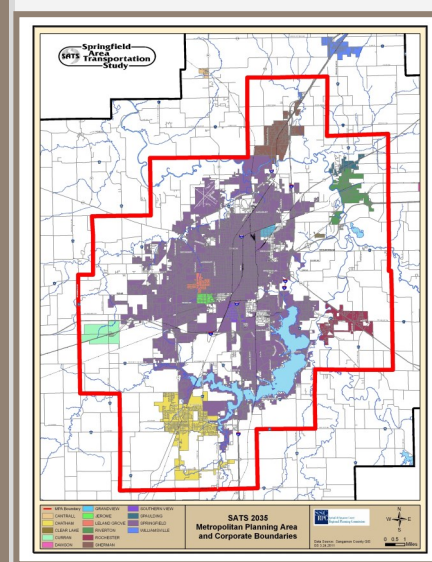
As the following pages show, the Transportation staff rose to the challenge.

The SSRPC's Transportation Planning team (left to right): Sr. Planner Linda Wheeland, and Assoc. Planners Brian Sheehan, Neha Soni, and Jason Sass.



## ABOUT THE SATS METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA

The boundaries of the Springfield Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) addressed by SATS are defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and while still remaining totally in Sangamon County has expanded to include many additional communities since 1990. Currently it includes the communities of Chatham, Clear Lake, Curran, Grandview, Jerome, Leland Grove, Riverton, Rochester, Sherman, Southern View, Springfield, and Spaulding, as well as some unincorporated portions of Sangamon County. In this area there is a diversity of demographics, economies, and environments, but also many commonalities important in meeting current transportation needs.







## Accepting the challenge of transportation system performance measurement

Over the five decades that transportation planning in metropolitan planning areas such as ours has been in place, the effort was driven by the desire to provide safe, efficient, and effective travel. Yet while the transportation projects undertaken in the Springfield area and elsewhere were meant to support these basic goals — with a general acceptance that their accomplishment *was* the result of local planning efforts — there was no concrete, data-driven system for evaluating the overall effect of the projects to determine how effective they really were in meeting them.

Enter new federal legislation: MAP 21 (the “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Act). This federal transportation legislation, passed in 2012, introduced the concept of performance measures into the national transportation planning and funding conversation,

requiring that targets be set at both the state and local levels to assess the actual performance of government dollars supporting transportation planning and the projects needed to bring plans to reality. The inclusion of data-driven performance measurement is seen as a significant improvement in local transportation planning, providing a great way to determine if the challenges identified through the planning process really are being met.

For several years the SSRPC staff worked with IDOT and MPOs from throughout the state to better understand the performance measurement system and targets, and rather than waiting for a statewide system, the SSRPC advanced local performance as part of the SATS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). In March, 2015, SATS

adopted 14 performance targets (reflecting the goals of the plan) that were evaluated in the LRTP One-Year Progress Report. Three of the targets rely on data that is not yet available. The status of the other 11 performance targets are summarized below. More information can be found in the One-Year Progress Report available online.

The performance targets have been incorporated into the Project Prioritization Application used for the selection of projects by SATS, will be identified with projects included in future annual Transportation Improvement Programs, and have guided activities and projects.

SATS ADOPTED TRANSPORTATION PERFORMANCE TARGETS (Established March 2015)	PERFORMANCE TARGET STATUS ( As of March 2016)
Reduce 5-year rolling avg. of traffic fatalities 25% (approx. 2% per yr.) by 2025.	-1.4%
Reduce 5-year rolling avg. of serious injuries 25% (approx. 2% per yr.) by 2025.	-5.0%
Increase number of SMTD passengers in FY 2014 10% by FY 2020.	+4.5%
Reduce the number and sq. footage of those road bridges in the MPA currently in service and expected to be in service during the life of the plan, classified as “structurally deficient” 10% by 2020.	Number of bridges: -7.7% Square Footage of bridges: -6.4%
Build 10% of the mileage of missing links in the road network identified by SATS by 2025.	0.0%
Build 50% of the key missing links in the Priority Pedestrian Network identified in the SATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan by 2020.	+22.6%
Complete 50% of key bicycle corridors identified by SATS that will connect citizens without vehicles to Economic Activity Centers by 2020.	+42.8%
Complete 100% on-road connection of the multi-use trails existing in 2014 by 2020.	+25.0%
Complete upgrades (100%) to the high-speed rail corridor, including the 3rd Street rail line in Springfield, by July 2017.	+5.1%
Consolidate the 3rd Street rail line on to the 10th Street rail corridor by 2030 (100%).	0.0%
Provide transit service to all 8 Economic Activity Centers by 2020 (100%)	+62.5%

## A “Well Done” from Federal Partners

### Responding to FHWA’s Review of SATS’ Efforts

In May, 2015, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) presented a report to the Springfield Area Transportation Study Policy Committee based on the findings of a planning review of SATS and its work conducted in January. The FHWA representatives reported that its review was very positive, speaking well of SATS and the work of the SSCRPC Transportation Planning staff.

The review offered a dozen recommendations for additional improvement. Many of the recommendations were minor, but even so, the SSCRPC staff took them to heart and immediately moved to implement improvements, preparing a plan of action.

Within a year the staff had completely implemented the plan and prepared a progress report outlining how each recommendation had been carried out. The progress report was presented at the May 2016 SATS meetings, and can be accessed online on the Transportation page of the SSCRPC website. The FHWA representative to SATS noted that this was the first time an MPO had created a plan to address planning review recommendations or had implemented all the recommendations.



## Developing the partnerships needed for transportation improvement

As noted on page 7 of this report, SATS is organized under a joint agreement between six jurisdictions, but conducts planning for the entire urbanized area in Sangamon County. This area includes many communities that previously had no formal representation through the MPO, but whose transportation needs are still relevant and important to the planning area. Through the efforts of the SSCRPC Transportation Planning staff, and as an outcome of the FHWA’s program review (see column to left) that changed last fall with formation of the **SATS Communities Committee**. All municipalities and townships were invited to participate on this committee, and those who took up the offer were: the city of Leland Grove; the villages of Jerome, Riverton, Rochester, Sherman, Southern View, and Spaulding; and Rochester Township.

The Communities Committee meets quarterly, sets its own agenda, has access to transportation specialists for presentations, has formal input to the transportation planning process, receives all information sent to SATS members, and is included on each SATS Technical Committee agenda for direct communication with that body.

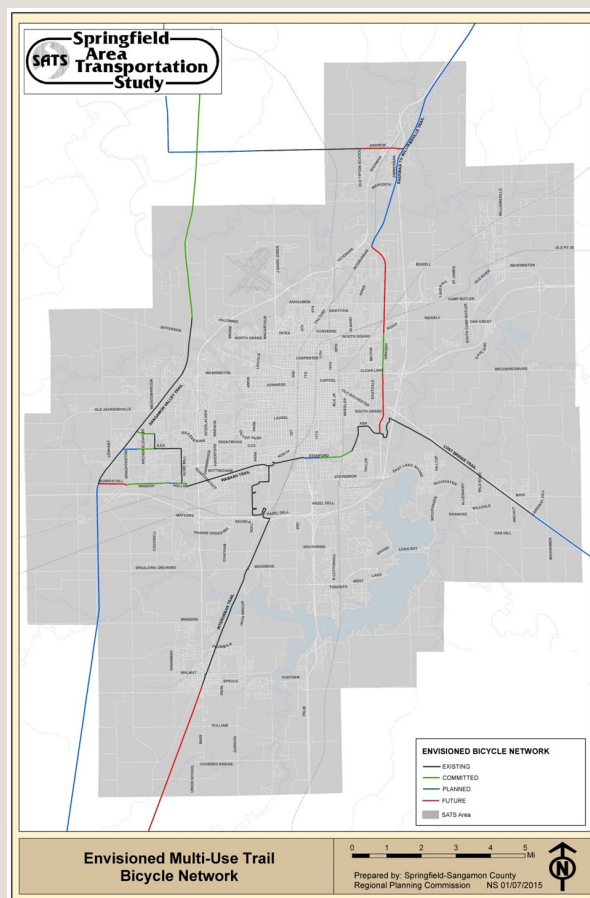
During the 2015-16 program year a recommendation coming from both the LRTP Citizens Advisory Committee and Communities Advisory Committee also created a new partnership in transportation planning. These two groups called for the creation of a committee that included all of the entities with responsibility for elements of the regional multi-use trails system in order to bring about greater consistency in the trails experience.



This **Multi-Use Trails Jurisdiction Committee** was formed in the fall of 2015, and includes representation from IDOT District 6, the City of Springfield, Sangamon County, the Springfield Park District, the Village of Chatham, and the Village of Rochester. The committee is facilitated by the Planning Commission’s Transportation staff and has been working to create a coordinated trail system. Two areas have already been addressed by the committee: emergency response support signage; and a policy concerning advertising, sponsorship, directional, and wayfinding signage on the trails. To achieve better recognition for the trail system, the logo above was also been adopted for it. The Envisioned Multi-Use Trails System, which includes on-road connections, is shown to the right.

The Envisioned Multi-Use Trails System, which includes on-road connections, is shown to the right.

The SATS Communities Committee meets







Work continues to complete the Carpenter Street underpass in advance of Springfield railroad consolidation

It is now difficult to believe that just seven years ago the SSCRPC staff was faced by one of its most significant challenges: entrance into the debate concerning high speed passenger rail service and rail corridor consolidation. The Commission's work on these subjects began in July 2009 with the release of its first study on this matter (*An Initial Consideration of Planning Issues Associated with High Speed Rail and Increased Freight on Springfield's 3rd Street Rail Corridor*), and continued for several more years with the production of almost two dozen white papers and planning studies on the pros and cons of the various approaches to rail service and corridor consolidation then being discussed.

But in an unprecedented chain of events, during PY 2015-16 the Commission was able to watch two major rail projects get underway that will advance both high speed passenger rail service to Springfield as well as the ultimate consolidation of the 3rd Street rail line onto the 10th Street rail corridor, a tremendous opportunity for the planning area that has been hoped for ever since Springfield's first city plan in 1925.

But since the statewide High Speed Rail Project, extending from Chicago to St. Louis, must be completed by 2017, efforts are ramp-

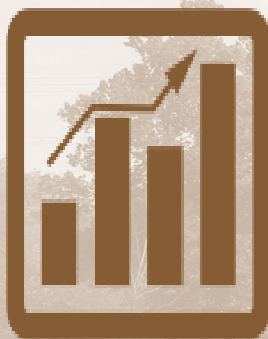
## High Speed Rail and Railroad Consolidation: Once a challenge, and now an opportunity

ing up. The City of Springfield and Sangamon County have been working with IDOT to ensure that improvements made to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street rail corridor will continue to support rail service in the short term, but will additionally support the movement of that rail line to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in the long run. Work to be undertaken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street line, at an estimated cost of \$30 million, includes: track Improvements, crossing Improvements, the closing of some crossings, the installation of safety fencing, as well as bridge and other safety upgrades.

Other high-speed rail projects are listed in the FY 2016-2019 SATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and include: a traffic signal interconnect with the Union Pacific Railroad crossing signals for Woodside Road at Iron Bridge Road; an Iron Bridge Road overpass at Union Pacific Railroad; a Woodside Road underpass at Union Pacific Railroad; Ridgely Avenue at Union Pacific Railroad roadway improvements and realignment of 11<sup>th</sup> Street; the closure of the Union Pacific Railroad crossing at Spruce Street in Chatham and the construction of a new crossing at Goldenrod Road, which is being extended.

Focus continues, however, on the consolidation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street rail line onto the 10<sup>th</sup> Street rail corridor. The first project in this endeavor is the construction of an underpass on Carpenter Street, which is expected to be completed this summer. Another project is listed for FY 2018 in the FY 2016-2019 TIP; an Ash Street underpass. The TIP Illustrative List also includes Springfield rail improvements on 10<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Street Corridors, and the Multi-modal Transfer Center on the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Rail Corridor.

### ADDITIONAL SSCRPC TRANSPORTATION PLANNING EFFORTS IN PY 2015-16



- Implementation of the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.
- 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Progress Reports.
- Creation of interactive maps available on the SSCRPC website relating to SATS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Envisioned Bicycle Network, Multi-use Trails Amenities and Sponsorships, Road-

way Functional Classification, Airport Parking Facilities.

- The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Curb Your Car Commute Challenge.
- The FY 2015 Listing of Federally Obligated Transportation Projects.
- The FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (including amendments and modifications).
- The completion of the Commodity Flow Study Report.
- On-going crash data analysis.
- Data, mapping, and administrative support to SMTD.
- Maintenance of the road database.
- The Planning Year 2017 Unified Planning Work Program.
- Presentations to various community groups.
- The SATS Project Prioritization application update.
- On-going staff support for SATS.
- The updating of SMTD schedule brochures.
- The use of the SSCRPC's Travel Demand Model (TDM) to evaluate road and rail projects

# LAND USE & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Probably no area of the Regional Planning Commission's practice presents more challenge than that of land use and environmental planning

Every year is a "year of challenges" for the Land Use & Environmental (LU&E) planning staff when it comes to providing the independent analyses of zoning cases in the City of Springfield and unincorporated Sangamon County. In some years, the challenge comes from the number of cases needing review, while in other years the challenge lies in the complexity of the cases presented. In either case, much work is involved.

For every zoning case reviewed by LU&E, the staff conducts a site visit to the property and identifies other uses in the immediate area to determine the trend in development and any potential land use conflicts. Tools, such as the local comprehensive plan as well as historical precedents set by the elected bodies in past zoning cases, are used to determine if the proposed zoning relief is compatible with the area. SSCRPC staff then assess whether the relief meets criteria for approval of the relief, forwarding its recommendation to the applicable zoning body.

During this planning year the staff completed a total number of 107 zoning case analyses. Of those, 58 were under the

City's jurisdiction and 49 were related to properties in unincorporated Sangamon County. While this represents a 17% decline in the number of zoning cases this reporting year compared to last, the complexity of the cases remained high.

This year, the subject matter of the cases for properties in the City of Springfield tended toward reuses of existing properties rather than the development of vacant properties, leading to questions pertaining to compatibility with the existing area. County zoning cases again primarily dealt with variances needed to carve off one or two small parcels of land from farmland for the purposes of creating a new building site. In both instances, zoning relief can be both controversial and confusing.

Most notable was the almost 38% decline in the number of zoning cases this past year compared to the previous highest year; 2013. Staff believes this decline continues to demonstrate a lingering weak economy in the region.



Senior Planner for Land Use Steve Kennan discusses project with Planning Intern Jordan Leaf

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Land Use & Environmental Planning group helps Historic Preservation Commission find oldest farmhouse

Identifying the oldest farmhouse in Sangamon County with an active connection to farming is no easy task. In June 2016, the Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission [HPC], in partnership with the Sangamon County Farm Bureau and Brandt Consolidated, Inc, presented certificates to 11 owners of houses constructed between 1823 and 1857.

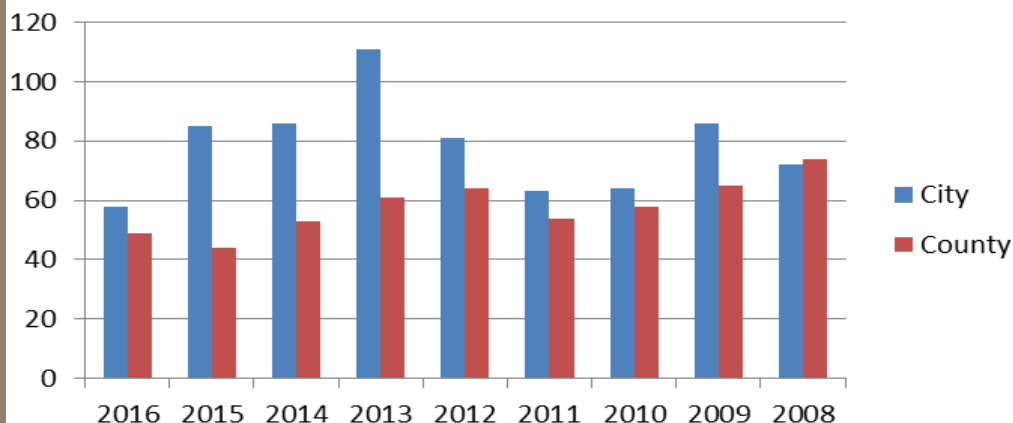
A year earlier, the HPC created a committee charged with identifying the oldest farmhouses in Sangamon County. This committee worked diligently, focusing on houses built prior to 1860 with an active connection to farming.

After thoughtful consideration and a good bit of research, the HPC chose the Barringer farmhouse located in Gardner Township. This home was constructed circa 1823 and is particularly unique because the log construction of the left wing still remains.



The Barringer Farmhouse, formerly owned by James Walters, was chosen as the oldest farmhouse in the Pre-Civil War Farmhouse Search.

## Zoning Case History





# Addressing Mother Nature's Challenge Through Planning

## SSCRPC staff steps up to address the results of the 2016 floods

Many area residents may not know that the SSCRPC's Land Use and Environmental Planning staff are quite involved in the challenges Mother Nature can throw our way, first because of their work in the development of the Regional Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, but also because the Planning Commission serves as Floodplain Administrator for the unincorporated portions of Sangamon County.

However, a large number of residents learned more about the LU&E staff when they received a late, and unwelcomed, holiday gift in the form of flooding during the last week of 2016. Heavy rains over a short period of time, coupled with already saturated land due to a wet fall, caused rivers and tributaries in the area to swell beyond capacity. According to the National Weather Service, rain event this past December resulted in the fifth highest historic crest of the Sangamon River, at 30.0 feet, since 1926.

And the county was not just affected by the rainfall within its boundaries, as it is also affected by rain events and flooding

in adjacent counties.

For example, the post-holiday rains were even more extensive in neighboring Christian County, where rains exceeding 6 inches were reported in Kincaid. Christian County is bordered on the north by the Sangamon River and is intersected by the South Fork of the Sangamon River. Since both counties "share" these waterways, excessive rain in one of the counties can cause more flooding in the other county. This was evidenced in December, 2016, as the river levels rose in Christian County and travelled into Sangamon County causing extensive flooding.

The National Weather Service's Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service monitors the river gauge located in Riverton and posts the data online. Along with the Planning Commission, emergency preparedness agencies, and road and highway crews, residents can monitor the online data to better prepare for the services that residents may need as a result of flooding.



The planning before, during and after this rain event was no exception. As the Sangamon River, the South Fork of the Sangamon River and various streams overflowed, crews sprang into action as planned as some roadways and bridges were closed, resulting in commuting challenges. In addition, many homes in the Spaulding and Rochester areas were sandbagged in attempt to keep floodwaters from entering the structures. Unfortunately, some residents were forced to evacuate until the flood waters receded.

But as Floodplain Administrator, the real challenges for the SSCRPC staff came after the flooding. If a residential structure is in the FEMA floodplain and damaged, LU&E staff must visit each affected structure and complete a substantial damage evaluation before homeowners can start the clean-up process. This report documents the flooding damage caused to the structure as compared to the fair market value of the home. Once a home has substantial damage over a 10 year period that exceeds 50% of the value of the home prior to the initial flood damage, the homeowner must bring the home into compliance with federal, state and local flood ordinances. Of course this assessment is also relevant to any state or federal assistance that might be provided to affected residents.

Six months after the flooding event, the challenges still continue. Several homeowners are still repairing their homes and continuing the cleanup process.

## Watching the river's flow

The Sangamon River has more than 50 miles of river way in Sangamon County. At an average width of 115 feet, the river is the county's largest moving water source. In addition to the Sangamon River and

its South Fork, the county also includes 428 miles, or about 1,611 acres, of streams, including Black Branch, Brush Creek, Buckhart Creek, Cantrall Creek, Clear Creek, Fancy Creek, Horse Creek, Lick Creek, Panther Creek, Polecat Creek, Prairie Creek, Richland Creek, Spring Creek, Sugar Creek, Wolf Creek and their tributaries. About 180 miles of these streams are less than 20 feet in average width.



# DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Development Planning takes on the challenge of new land development projects

While many of the projects and activities of the SSCRPC staff this past year took a somewhat elevated look at the region, as is normally the case, the work of the Development Planning (DP) group must literally consider planning at the ground level. This is because a large part of the group's work involves executing the duties specified within the County's and City of Springfield's land subdivision ordinances.

These ordinances both serve two primary purposes: narrowly, to provide for the legal and orderly division of land, and more broadly, to promote growth in the region in such a way as to protect the health, safety, and welfare of current and future residents. A key respon-

sibility in carrying out these two purposes includes the coordination and management of the process whereby land development projects are reviewed and approved. This is the land subdivision process that is handled by the SSCRPC through its Land Subdivision Committee (LSC).

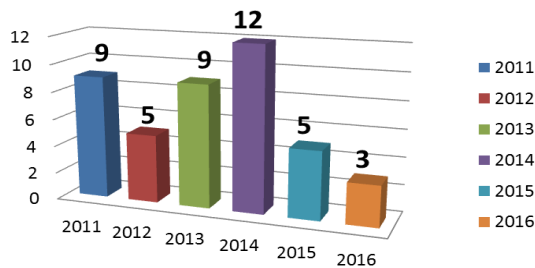
As the charts below indicate, the number of most project types needing review declined during PY 2015-16. The exception to this decline was the review of final plats, which was at its highest level since 2012. Overall, the LSC reviewed a total of 34 development plans during the program year, averaging 2.8 items needing review

each month, including two months during which no items needed review. The SSCRPC finds cause for concern, as this number is down from a total of 50 projects during the previous program year, a decline of 1.4 projects reviewed each month.

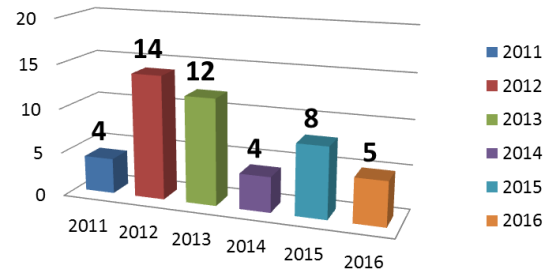
In addition to plan review, the DP staff also reviewed and approved 131 tract surveys during the program year. This is a noticeable increase, representing the largest number of surveys approved since the 2010 program year.



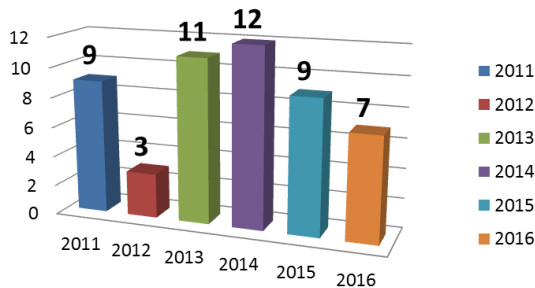
Location & Sketch Maps Reviewed



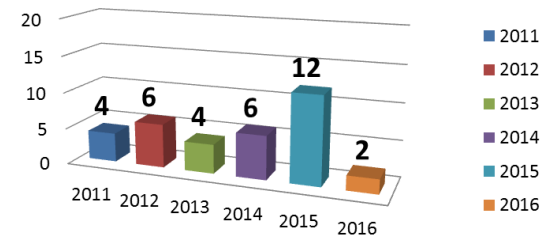
Site Plan/Large Scales Reviewed



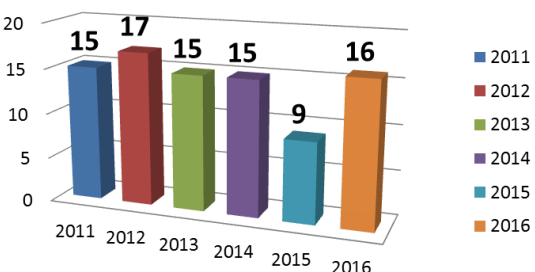
Preliminary Plans Reviewed



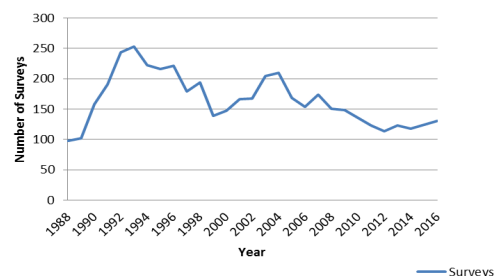
Partial Plat of Vacation / Easement Vacation



Final Plats Reviewed



Tract Surveys Approved By Year





## Identifying Legacy Neighborhoods

### Finding new ways to protect older neighborhoods

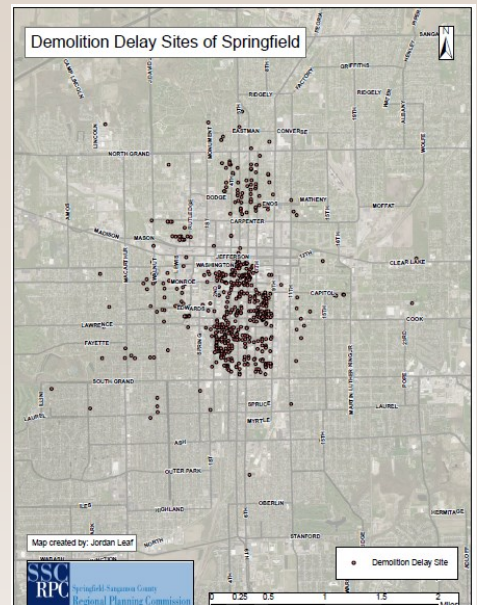
The work of the Development Planning staff doesn't just include reviewing the plans for new developments, as conserving older neighborhoods is just as important. The preservation of older neighborhoods is more cost effective than new development and makes a community's quality of life even better.

Springfield is particularly blessed with many fine older neighborhoods, and their structures contribute to the city and give it context. These neighborhoods are often recognized and appreciated by the entire community, becoming something of a legacy to be passed from the city's past to its future. But as time goes by, neighborhoods and the structures they contain are affected by normal deterioration, shifting living patterns, and even larger economic forces that can cause them to be lost absent some public attention and protective measures.

But how might we identify neighborhoods at risk before loss occurs? That is a question that the SSRPC sought to begin addressing this program year with the help of Planning Intern Jordan Leaf who worked with the Land Development Planning staff to identify and map the shared characteristics of at-risk areas.

To begin his work, Leaf began by mapping all of the properties identified by inventories ap-

proved by Springfield's Historic Sites Commission as potentially eligible for land-marking (see map to right) as they were subject to the city's demolition delay ordinance. He found that Springfield currently has 613 such properties, 513 of which (83.6%) are located in just four neighborhoods: Enos Park, the historic downtown, Old Aristocracy Hill, and Vinegar Hill. This result was not surprising as all four areas had been the subject of past historic structure inventories.



However, he also found that they shared five characteristics of use in identifying other neighborhoods that could become at-risk. These are: a majority of renter-occupied housing; a large population of residents who moved to the neighborhoods between 2000 and 2009; many structures built during the 1940's, or even earlier; a majority of households having a low net worth; and a large percentage of households that are lower income.

The SSRPC is now looking to see how the risk factors identified by this study might be used to identify at-risk neighborhoods more generally, with the intention that such identification could be used to better target neighborhood preservation and remediation efforts as part of the SSRPC's work on Springfield's new Comprehensive Plan.

### MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION'S LAND SUBDIVISION COMMITTEE: PY 2015-2016

Much of the work done by the Land Development Planning staff is with the assistance of the Commission's Land Subdivision Committee. This committee includes representatives of both the City of Springfield and Sangamon County, as well as representatives of relevant special districts and private utilities. It also includes representatives of the Commission and the public. All SSRPC officers serve as ex officio members of the Land Subdivision Committee. Committee member alternates included in brackets.

**Gregg Humphrey**, Director & Engineer, Springfield Metro Sanitary District. Land Subdivision Committee Chair [Fred Nika/Jason Jacobs]

**Nate Bottom**, City Engineer, Springfield Department of Public Works. Committee Vice Chair [T.J. Heavisides]

**Jeph Bassett**, Springfield Fire Department-Fire Safety [Chris Cole]

**Brad Bixby**, City Water, Light and Power-Electric Division [Gary Hurley]

**Dean Graven**, Citizen Member

**Steve Hall**, Sangamon County Public Health Department [Allen Alexander]

**Mike Johnson**, City Water, Light and Power-Water Division [Lori Cox]

**Trustin Harrison**, Zoning Administrator, Sangamon County Zoning Office

**Elliott McKinley**, Springfield Park District [Derek Harms]

**Matt McLaughlin**, Zoning Administrator, Springfield Building & Zoning Department [John Harris]

**Karen Davis**, Director, Springfield Office of Planning & Economic Development [Lauren Gibson]

**Kenneth Springs**, Citizen Member and SSRPC Commissioner

**Lori Williams**, Traffic Engineer, Springfield Department of Public Works

**Timothy Zahn**, Director & County Engineer, Sangamon County Highway Department [Brian Wright/Brian Davis/Casey Pratt]

# EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

When challenges arise, it is the experience and expertise of the SSCRPC's staff that comes to the fore

We began this annual activity report by noting that the challenges the SSCRPC faced this year in meeting its responsibilities were only resolved due to the hard work, dedication and expertise of its staff. Sometimes the hard work of the staff may even go unrecognized, or even taken for granted, due to the excellence of the work product itself. But it should not be.

For example, and as the listing on the next page shows, the Commission closed out this program year with only 11 staff members. This was a reduction of three staff compared to the staff complement just two years ago. A decline of three staff positions may not seem like much, but it represents a decrease in personnel resources of over 20% at a time in which the workload was increasing and even becoming more technical.

Even with a reduction in staff, the expertise of the members of it remained remarkable, particularly in comparison to other similar organizations in Illinois.

For example, of the 11 staff members, two are in administrative or support positions, leaving only nine fully engaged in planning activities for the region. These nine staff members represent about 110 years of experience in planning at the Commission alone.

Six of the nine held advanced degrees in planning or a directly related field, and the entire staff continue to work to advance their skills in the field.

For example, one of the staff, Associate Transportation Planner Neha Soni, became recognized as a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners

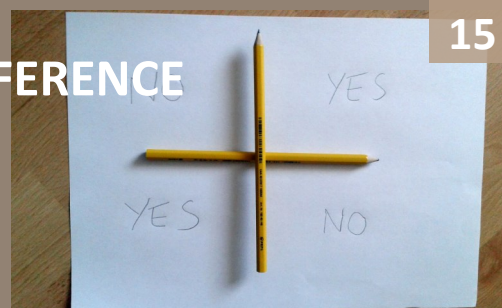
during this past program year, which is why you will now see "AICP" after her name!

Others continued to develop additional skills as well. For example, one staff member, Associate Planner Brian Sheehan, achieved his GIS certification, several gained additional training in transportation demand modeling (Springfield and County staff were invited to take part in this additional training as well), and two have training in the IMPLAN econometric model. The list could go on.

In addition, the SSCRPC staff is often noticed by others due to the creative and innovative nature of their work. For example, Ms. Soni and Senior Transportation Planner Linda Wheeland presented a project using the online tool INVEST (Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool) at the 2015 IDOT Fall Planning Conference. This came to IDOT's attention not just because the SSCRPC is only one of two entities in Illinois noted by FHWA as using the tool, but because of the unique way that the Commission is using it as part of the transportation planning process rather than as a means to evaluate the sustainability of a road project after it is built. This approach was so innovative, that they were previously asked by FHWA to provide a presentation on it at a national conference.

The expertise of the Regional Planning Commission's staff can be demonstrated in more qualitative ways as well. On the many occasions in which SSCRPC staff have shared their work with our regional and local planning colleagues from around the state, one of the first questions asked is "Who was your consultant?" Our statewide colleagues are constantly surprised when the answer is, "Oh, we didn't have a consultant, we did this ourselves!"

But no review of our staff's expertise would be fair or complete without a final comment concerning the Commission's administrative and support staff. But for the outstanding work of our Operations Assistant, Mary Jane Niemann, and Administrative Secretary, Gail Weiskopf, the gang of nine working to meet the Commission's planning responsibilities simply could not occur. They both keep us on track, well organized, and particularly in years like this past one, on budget.



Operations Assistant Mary Jane Niemann, and Administrative Secretary, Gail Weiskopf, kept the Commission staff on track during PY 2015-16.







Sr. Planners Joe Zeibert and Linda Wheeland, and Ass't Director Molly Berns

## COMMISSION STAFF: Program Year 2015-2016

### PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF

(as of June 1, 2016)

#### *Administrative*

Norm Sims, Executive Director  
Molly Berns, Assistant Director & Strategic and Comprehensive Planning Manager  
Mary Jane Niemann, Accounting Technician & Operations Assistant  
Gail Weiskopf, Administrative Secretary

#### *Development Planning*

Joe Zeibert, Senior Planner  
Peter Jordet, Associate Planner

#### *Land Use & Environmental Planning*

Steve Keenan, Senior Planner  
Vacant, Associate Planner

#### *Transportation Planning*

Linda Wheeland, Senior Planner  
Jason Sass, Associate Planner  
Brian Sheehan, Associate Planner  
Neha Soni, Associate Planner, AICP

### SANGAMON COUNTY ZONING DEPARTMENT STAFF

(as of June 1, 2016)

Trustin Harrison, Zoning Administrator  
Jane Lewis, Administrative Assistant

STAFF WHO LEFT THE COMMISSION DURING PY2014-15  
Jeff Fulgenzi, Strategic & Comprehensive Planning

PART-TIME EMPLOYEES AND INTERNS DURING PY2015-16  
Matthew Case  
Jordan Leaf  
Matt Titus

## PARTNERSHIPS & LINKAGES DURING THE PROGRAM YEAR

The SSCRPC's staff maintains a number of partnerships and linkages in carrying out their duties. Many of these involve advising and/or providing staff assistance to committees or other bodies established by the Commission, such as the Land Subdivision Committee and Executive Policy Board. Others involve partnerships with agencies and organizations relevant to advancing the SSCRPC's mission. Some of these include:

**County:** Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission; Sangamon County Public Health, Solid Waste and Zoning Committee; Sangamon County Zoning Board of Appeals.

**City of Springfield:** Springfield Historic Sites Commission; Springfield Planning and Zoning Commission; Springfield Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee; Downtown Springfield, Inc.; Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce; Greater Springfield Chamber's Q-5 Initiative (Land Subdivision Advisory Committee, Development Policy Council, Executive Policy Council).

**Regional:** Citizens' Efficiency Commission for Sangamon County; the Regional Leadership Council of Sangamon County; SATS Communities Committee; Springfield Area Transportation Study; Multi-Use Trails Jurisdictional Committee; Sangamon Valley Local Emergency Planning Committee; SMTD Disabled Person Advisory Committee; Region 7 Human Services Transportation Planning Committee; Central Illinois Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration; Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association.

**State:** Illinois Greenways and Trails Council; Illinois Dept. of Transportation Travel Demand Modeling Group; Illinois Association of Regional Councils; IDOT Transportation Measures Technical Advisory Group; Landmarks Preservation Council; Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commissions; Illinois Association of Floodplain and Stormwater Management.

**National:** American Planning Association; American Society for Public Administration; Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations; National Association of Regional Councils.



**ADVISING**  
**PLANNING**  
**EVALUATING**  
**LEADING**

## **ABOUT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

Created in 1987 to address the planning needs in the region in a coordinated, cooperative and continuing way, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) serves as the joint planning body for Sangamon County and the City of Springfield, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning in the region.

The Commission works with other local units of government, public agencies and special districts throughout the region to promote orderly growth and redevelopment, and assists Sangamon County's communities with their planning needs. Through its professional staff, the SSCRPC provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economic development, environmental matters, and risk mitigation, while also conducting various special research, analytic and demonstration projects.

The SSCRPC's staff work is overseen by the Commission, a 17 member board which includes representatives from the Sangamon County Board, the Springfield City Council, various special units of government, and six citizens appointed by the City and County.



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**July 2016**

